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ABSTRACT

This paper contains a historical review of the literature pertaining to American popular literature and analysis of two different samples of adult fiction on best sellers, one an analysis of readability levels and one an analysis of the portrayal of female characters. In the first analysis the Fry Readability Formula was applied to each of 60 adult fiction best sellers, representing the top ten best sellers starting in the year 1923 and proceeding every ten years up to 1973. The mean readability score for 1923 was 7.3 with a range from grade 6 to 9; for 1933 the mean score was 7.1 with a range from grade 4 to 9; for 1943 the mean score was 7.5 with a range of grade 5 to 10; for 1953 the mean score was 8.3 with a range grade 7 to 11; for 1963 the mean readability score was 8 with a range from grade 6 to 11; and in 1973 the mean score was 7.4 with a range from grade 6 to 10. The second study concerned the kind of portrayal of women in 1924, 1964, and 1974 bestsellers. Some of the conclusions reached were that while all of the 1924 best sellers contained female characters important to the plot, over half of the 1974 novels contained no principal or major supporting females; most of the total female characters were portrayed as young women, and no major difference existed in sexual behavior over the years. (MKM)

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BEST SELLERS EVALUATED FOR READABILITY AND PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

OF

RUTGERS

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

BY

LYDIA DOMKIW SCHULZE

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Best sellers represent a promising area of literature that needs to be explored. The values, attitudes, and preoccupations of a society are reflected in the literature of the times. There are the great best sellers--"the classics"--which are read by succeeding generations and are incorporated into school curricula. However, those novels that are more revealing of a time and a place and a people in history are those that are read in great numbers, usually over a short period of time, and are then forgotten as events shape new thoughts and feelings in the next generation. Best-seller lists can be found in various publications like the Publishers' Weekly and the New York Times Book Review section, for example. While many objections can be raised to these lists as accurate measures of public reading taste, they do represent a successful attempt at categorizing a large part of the literature being read at one particular time.

This study will examine two characteristics of selected best-selling novels as compiled annually by the Publishers' Weekly. First, it will calculate and discuss the readability level of novels starting in 1923 and

progressing every 10 years to 1973. Second, this study will attempt to explore the portrayal of female roles in the best-selling novels from 1924 and 1964, two periods of time similar in social history, and from 1974, the latest date for this study for assessing any impact of the feminist movement.

Background of the Problem

During her stay at Publishers' Weekly as an associate editor, Alice Payne Hackett became interested in the phenomena of the best seller. She began to compile and organize the statistics of book sales that led to the publication of the magazine's best-seller lists. Her interest in this topic eventually led her to write a book, Fifty Years of Best Sellers (1945), with two updatings, the most recent in 1967. The idea of the best seller has since been adopted by many other publications. While many literary critics do not regard best sellers as first-class literature, Mott (1947) strongly argues that only the cynic and the heedless can disregard popular literature. He points out possible areas of research on this literature:

> a sociologist finds material for his inquiries into the mores, the social historian sees the signposts of the development of a people, and students of government observe popular movements at work. (p. 5)

For the researcher in reading, best sellers can provide a wealth of material for other kinds of investigation. One particular kind focuses on gathering information about the readability levels of this material. Is it

possible that today's public consumes reading materials of a higher readability level than that of even 50 years ago? On the other hand, however, could these older novels be of a higher readability level because the people able to purchase books at that time were perhaps more affluent and better educated?

Klare (1963) defined readability as the ease of understanding or comprehension due to the style of writing. While a great deal of effort has gone into developing various readability formulas and to subjecting early readers and children's books to these formulas to arrive at an estimate of grade level difficulty, little work has been done on comparing the readability scores of past adult material with similar contemporary material. Only one study by Craig (1953) has been done on best sellers at all, but the researcher used all-time best sellers rather than any specific lists compiled by year. More articles have been done on the readability level of newspapers and magazines, but the field remains small in terms of numbers of comparison types of studies.

A second focus of investigation is on the portrayal of female characters in these best sellers. Sociologists, among others, have come to view all media; and among these, one must include literature, as socializing agents, as instruments that pass on certain values and role stereotypes. The increased sexual consciousness that has developed, especially among women, as a result of the women's

liberation movement has resulted in increasing attention being given to the examination of these agents to see exactly what characteristics of sex roles are being presented. This study is one such examination of a particular kind of literature. Specifically, this study will examine the portrayal of female characters in the 10 hardcover fiction best sellers from 1924, 1964, and 1974 as compiled in Publishers' Weekly.

This theme received its first major treatment in Millett's Sexual Politics (1969) in which Millett used examples from literature to support her theory of the oppression of women as a result of the political and social structure of Western society. Since that time, much research on female sex roles has been undertaken as a result of the growth in the women's liberation movement. This research, however, has been and continues to be largely in the nature of literary criticism; thus, the work itself, as well as its author, are often accused of being too subjective. The study undertaken by Women on Words and Images (1972) on sex stereotyping in children's readers has attempted to gather research along more statistical and quantifiable lines.

Statement of the Problem

In an attempt to shed light on the nature of the material read by a large public, this study will examine two characteristics of selected best-selling novels in

order to answer the following questions.

Readability

1. What is the readability level of each of the 10 best sellers starting in 1923 and proceeding every 10 years to 1973?

2. Has there been any meaningful change in this level over the 50-year period?

Portrayal of Female Characters

1. How many of the best-selling novels of 1924, 1964, and 1974 have portrayed women as principal characters; and how many novels have portrayed women as major supporting characters?

2. How have females in these same best sellers been portrayed according to the following characteristics?

a. Relationship to principal male character

b. Economic characteristics

c. Social characteristics

d. Sexual behavior

e. Intellectual characteristics

f. Change(s) experienced

Definition of Terms

Best Seller

A best seller is a hardcover novel found on a list compiled annually by Publishers' Weekly magazine using the criteria of number of sales in bookstores.

Readability

Readability refers to the relative reading ease or difficulty of a passage as measured by a readability formula.

Readability Formula

In this case, the Fry Readability Formula was used to measure sentence length and vocabulary load as a function of number of syllables.

Limitations of the Study

One major limitation of this study lies first in the use of best-seller lists as a definitive statement on adult reading tastes. The best-seller lists have some drawbacks. First, the lists vary from publication to publication because each publication has its own formula and criteria for determining the composition of the lists. Second, the lists represent only those books actually sold in bookstores. Thus, the population of this study is restricted to those who have the money to purchase these novels. A large number of people are excluded from this study; for example, those people who borrow books from libraries rather than buy books.

Further, the best-seller lists are compiled in such a way that they do not include books sold in paperback or through book clubs.

Finally, the books under study are limited to the area of fiction. Nonfiction best-seller lists are also compiled and should be investigated in other studies.

While all these considerations must be taken into account when interpreting the results of this study, no better alternative to the best-seller lists exists to sample adult reading tastes. The growth of the book-publishing industry and of the reading public as evidenced by book sales in the last decades adds some validity to the best-seller lists as accurate representations of the reading tastes of a large segment of our population.

A second limitation of this study lies in the attempt to analyze literature by some quantifiable measure. One must strip away literary elements such as style of writing, plot development in which major characters may play different roles at different times, and purpose of writing or theme without modifying the original intent of the novel in any way. The reliability or the validity of any objective analysis which tries to eliminate these elements of style mentioned above is hard to measure. Furthermore, another researcher examining these same books might arrive at different conclusions because answering objective questions about literature often involves making judgments.

Importance of the Study

A way in which to gain some insight into the nature of a particular society is to examine what the public reads, especially that public that is no longer in school and therefore not bound by curriculum reading requirements. This study will attempt to shed some light on this question

by examining one kind of popular literature.

While many studies have been done on the readability levels of children's books, this study will calculate the readability levels of adult reading material. Furthermore, this study will compare the readability levels of older materials with those of newer materials.

Analyses of sex roles in literature has also been largely restricted to children's materials. Again, this study will examine the nature of the portrayal of female characters in adult literature.

On a more pragmatic level, the importance of this study lies in its potential contributions to possible curriculum development in high schools and colleges. Many best sellers, depending on their readability levels, could be used in courses like English Literature or History, thus increasing the amount and variety of materials.

Overview of the Study

Chapter II will present a literature search of studies and writings relevant to the topics of best sellers, readability of adult popular materials both past and present, and the treatment of female roles in literature.

The actual methodology of the study will be discussed in Chapter III. Two key elements of the study will be discussed in more detail. First, the compilation of the best-seller lists will be explained. Second, the construction of the Codesheet used to evaluate the novels for

portrayal of female roles will be discussed.

Chapter IV will include the results of the readability analyses on the 60 novels under study. The results from the 30 novels under examination for roles of female characters will also be presented.

Conclusions based on the data in the previous chapter will be discussed in detail in Chapter V along with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature search was conducted on three separate topics--the history of the popular book in this country, readability studies using popular adult reading materials from various periods, and studies of the nature of the portrayal of female characters in literature.

History of Popular Literature

The history of popular literature in America is a varied and interesting one. The founding of this country and its consequent growth and development are clearly mirrored by the different literature of each period. By examining the nature of this literature and the ways in which it changed, one can better understand not only the events in our nation's history but a great deal more about its people.

Frank Mott has attempted to write such a history in Golden Multitudes (1947). While his book is extremely comprehensive and is a major work in this area of research, it ends with World War II. Much change and growth has occurred in the book-publishing industry and in book readership since that time.

Almost all of the literature read during colonial

times was of a religious nature. The Bible, certainly, was the best seller of this period (as it is even today); but religion was not restricted to just that publication. Catechisms, hymnals, and books on how to live and die in the proper religious way were common in most homes. Religion was not all dry preaching, however. In Pilgrim's Progress, the lessons were illuminated through the use of adventure and conflict. These two plot characteristics were also an important part of another popular type of literature at that time; that is, the accounts of hostages taken by Indians, complete with massacres and tortures. These accounts were

> overlaid by a religious fervor, illustrating, at the extreme, what man could be like in the absence of religion [as the Indians were thought to be] and what trials the religious and faithful could endure. (Mott, 1947, p. 21)

Two factors seen in this period are important to mention. First, 12 of the 20 authors of the best-selling books of the time were British. The ties between the colonies and the mother country were very strong; and even after the Revolution, Americans continued to look to Britain for their standards of learning and culture. Further, this demand meant that many books had to be imported. Second, the first books in the colonies were issued from the Cambridge printing office which was an adjunct of Harvard College. This press was firmly controlled by the founding fathers of the Puritan settlement.

The latter half of the 18th century saw the growth

in number of the "seduction and tears" novels (Mott, 1947, p. 35) many by British authors such as Pamela. These Gothic romances centered upon romantic seduction and manners; but, again, overriding the characters' actions was a religious morality.

The Revolutionary era was dominated predictably by works of a political nature such as Common Sense. The numbers of printers began to grow rapidly, and most printed matter came in the form of newspapers and short pamphlets rather than in bound volumes.

After the war, a period of militant nationalism set in. Paradoxically, it was at this time that large numbers of Shakespeare's works were distributed. Mott sees this as the result of weakening religious fervor and a desire for oratory, spectacle, and costuming.

It is important to remember that during this time no copyright laws existed either within the nation or internationally. This fact was to be of the greatest significance in the development of the first period of distribution of cheap books that occurred in the 1840's. In addition, technology had begun to change the nature of the printing industry. Faster presses and papermaking machines were introduced at this time. Smaller, less well-established printers took advantage of these two factors to flood the American market with cheap British imports, pirated from English authors. The low cost of the books was possible because these printers attached these novels,

usually in serial form, as extras or supplements to their newspapers and went so far as to issue these novels without covers in order to avoid mailing charges.

In addition to the political literature of the time, the Civil War period of 1830 through 1870 saw the growth in popularity of the historical romance. In general, during the 50's, the American book publishing business experienced its biggest boom up to that time. Before it ended with the financial crash of 1857, it had seen the appearance of more best sellers than any previous decade. The middle-class American home was one of the chief focal points of this literature. This "Home-and-Jesus formula" (Mott, 1947, p. 122) proved enormously popular. Of course, such popularity stimulated the publication of many poor quality melodramas.

During 1875 to 1893, the second outburst of cheap novels hit the market. The declining prices of paper and improved presses made these cheap novels possible. Thousands of these cheapies, which were usually called dime novels, were printed; they were mostly original stories of novelette length written by American authors. They also pointed the way for the cheap publication of full length reprint novels in series. As before, these dime novels almost wrecked the major publishing houses, which, in hopes of remaining competitive, developed the pocket or handy-sized bound volumes. Mott concludes of this period that

> literary piracy, the tricks of price cutting, the publication of much inane and driveling fiction, and the wretched bookmaking which this movement encouraged

> were deplorable. On the other hand, a considerable part of the literature published was of a high class, and much of it probably could have been brought to the attention of the great popular audience in no other way. (Mott, 1947, p. 155)

In terms of ideas, the 1880's and 90's were characterized by turbulent and confusing clashes of opinions. Books were written that debated orthodox religion, radical theories of labor and poverty, curious ideologies in ethics, pseudoscience, women's rights, industry--all of these and more were the subjects of the novels appearing at that time.

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by a series of historical and cloak-and-sword novels which caught the attention of the reading public around the early 1890's. After such novels made their initial success, they prospered by falling in with the American expansionist ideology. They suited the moods of the times. Along with these thrillers, the first two decades saw a regeneration of the family novel. These novels were optimistic, romantic, and made cheerfulness in the face of troubles a primary virtue. Obviously, the expansive mood of these decades provided the kind of emotional climate which valued optimistic philosophies.

The postwar period can be characterized by the international makeup of its best-seller list. America was assuming a role as world leader. Also, following World War I, the popularity of nonfiction climbed until by the mid 30's it was outselling fiction.

The decade of the 20's was one of prosperity, confidence, expansion, and the revolt of youth with their assault upon the old values. With the depression of the 30's, Americans were ready for a change. Anthony Adverse was the literary phenomenon of the times. Mott (1947) characterizes this novel in the following manner:

> it had plenty of sex but it was not stridulous or saucy. It afforded escape from the worries of the depression in the travels and adventures of the hero at the end of the eighteenth century, thus leading readers to the appeal of the historical romance, a favorite format for best sellers, and giving them a travelogue to boot. (p. 254)

The other literary bombshell with much the same to offer was Gone With the Wind.

The coming of World War II brought an end to an old era in book publishing. These changes occurred in spite of the war, for war conditions brought on shortages of labor, paper, linotype metal (to name a few things) which retarded the expansion of mass markets for books. Yet, the tremendous expansion in technology and size of readership are the chief characteristics of this new era.

Since 1943, the demand for books has grown steadily. The increased demand means a growing readership, the result largely of increased population and better schooling for more people. This increased reading public has influenced development of better supply techniques; and each, in turn, has reinforced the other. The growth of the book clubs as a new technique of distribution has been instrumental in facilitating this growth. Advertising techniques have been

perfected to the point that large segments of the population can be informed as to a book's publication and content. And, certainly, the refinement of the paperback, whose ancestor was the dime novel of the 1870's, has revolutionized the composition and size of the reading public.

Hart's study (1950) covered much the same material as Mott's; however, he did make two interesting observations. First, he specifically points out the distinction between the best seller and the truly popular book that will remain for future generations to read and enjoy.

> The book that time judges to be great is occasionally also the book popular in its own period; but, by and large, the longer-lived work reflects the demands of the moment only in the most general sense. Usually the book that is popular pleases the reader because it is shaped by the same forces that mold his non-reading hours, so that its dispositions and convictions, its language and subject recreate the sense of the present to die away as soon as that present becomes the past. . . . Literary taste is not an isolated phenomenon. The taste of the largest number of readers is shaped by contemporary pressures more than is the taste of the highly cultivated reader. Books flourish when they answer a need and die when they do not. (Hart, 1950, pp. 281, 285)

Hart's second point stresses the role of women in the development of books into best sellers. Towards the end of the 18th century in America, the middle class, with all its energies focused on settling the land and on expansion in general, was growing and developing its tastes and values. Circulating libraries were a middle-class institution, as was the novel. Hart characterizes the 18th century as having three principal fashions in fiction--the sentimental tale, the novel of sensibility, and the Gothic

novel. Clearly, all three types appeal directly to women. The novel was essentially a woman's possession, Hart declares.

The 19th century experienced a new economic expansion and a renewed strengthening of the middle class. Sex roles became more definitely delineated. Men made money and took care of the business of the nation; the women took care of the home. The woman became the judge of cultural affairs. The novel facilitated the union between domesticity and culture. Fiction came to be more and more concerned with women and their special needs; this was reflected in the increasing number of female characters appearing in the novels. In addition to being the most avid readers of these books, women began to write most of them. Hart (1950) cites Fred Lewis Pattee's term, the "feminine fifties" (p. 92) as the time that these novels reached their peak in popularity.

A change in this trend occurred as a result of the economic hard times in the 1890's when, in an attempt to escape from the pressures and complexities of life, both men and women turned to sentimental fiction containing a cheery view of life. Men's literature may have been more rugged in setting and subject, but it was no less sentimental or innocent in its attitude. In general, Hart (1950) points out that the genre of romance has always been an important element of America's popular literature, for a "close adherence to fact or to the exactitude of the

reasoning mind set standards too demanding for a wide democratic audience" (p. 104).

Some people have turned their attention to trying to determine which characteristics make books popular. Bode (1965) proposed one element in success when he advised that characters should be fashioned to be "individual enough to make some impression on the reader's intelligence but typical enough so that the reader will not have to ponder them or wrack his mind in an attempt to classify them" (p. 129).

Granville Hicks (1934) attacked this problem from a largely elitist point of view, concluding several things. First, the books on best-seller lists are neither the worst nor the best-written books. Those books that do achieve the dubious distinction of best sellers are those that combine a romantic story with an appeal to old-fashioned religiosity or to modernistic pseudopsychology. The book pretends to be profound; yet, it is really commonplace in its characters and its message. Hick's second point expands upon a point made by Hart. The blame for the popularity of such a literary approach, Hart reasons, must lie on the middle class "who do not want to be made to think . . . but who do want to feel that they are thinkers" (Hart, 1934, p. 628).

A content analysis approach to best sellers was undertaken in an extensive study by John Harvey (1949). Best and poor sellers were scored on the basis of the

absence or presence of over 1,000 variables subsumed under six major categories--action, emotion, personalities of the major characters, plot, themes, romanticization, and simplicity. Some of the more important variables found to be influential in determining a book's popularity were the central male character's affectionate attitude toward other characters, readability, and sentimental theme.

Readability Studies

Few studies have undertaken the calculation of readability levels of popular adult literature. Even fewer studies have attempted a comparison of materials from previous periods of time with present-day works.

Craig (1953) conducted a study of the readability levels of best sellers by applying the Yoakam Readability Formula to a list of such novels as presented in Mott (1947). This formula is primarily a measure of vocabulary difficulty. Mott (1947) compiled a list of best sellers containing 324 books published from 1662 to 1945. The criterion he used was that the books had sold in numbers that equaled 1% of the population of the continental United States for the decade in which they were published. Craig examined 200 books from this list, and his results were:

1. The range of difficulty of these books was 5.2 to 14.8. The distribution of readability levels followed the bell curve (Figure 1).
2. The median difficulty of these books was 10.8.
3. The median grade levels varied from 9.3 to 11.1

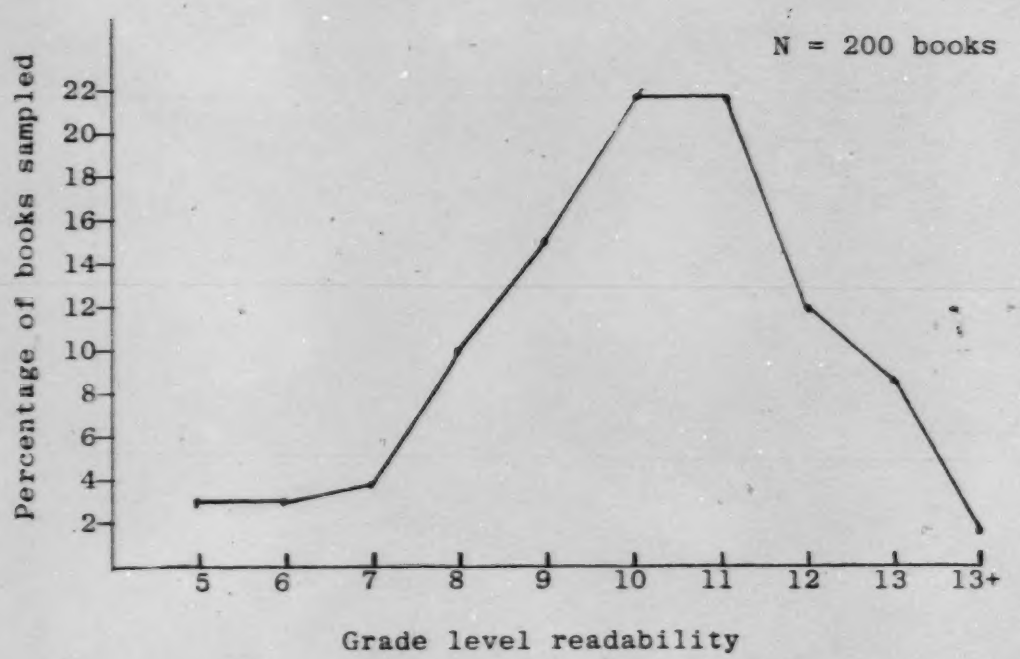

Figure 1. Distribution of readability levels of best sellers as calculated by Craig (1953).

(see Table 1).

4. The 21 best sellers which lead the list in sales averaged almost a full grade easier than the overall average of difficulty of best sellers. Craig concluded that ease of reading is a factor influencing the sale of books.

Barganz and Dulin (1970) examined the readability levels of selected mass magazines from 1925 to 1965. The magazines they chose came from the 25 top-selling magazines listed in the World Almanac. They included Readers Digest, Saturday Evening Post, Ladies' Home Journal, Popular Mechanics, and Harpers. This last choice was made specifically because of its reputation as a high-brow magazine. By submitting the lead article from each magazine to the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, they arrived at the readability level. The results of this study showed, first, no major trend in readability levels over the years. Furthermore, the five magazines were clustered around the same level, that of grades 10-14. Specifically in the year 1965, each lead article in the five magazines was judged to be on the 13th grade level.

Reiley (1973) investigated the readability levels of the wire news of the Associated Press and the United Press International for one day. The Fry Readability Formula was applied to 72 releases whose content was identical and whose length was equalized. The results indicated that the mean readability level for the AP stories was 10th grade, while the mean for UPI was between 10th and 11th.

TABLE 1

MEAN GRADE LEVELS OF BEST SELLERS AS CALCULATED BY CRAIG (1953)

Years of Best Sellers	Mean Grade Level
Before 1750	9.3
1750-1800	10.5
1800-1850	11.1
1850-1900	10.1
1900-1945	10.9

Furthermore, Reiley broke the stories down into categories and applied the same formula to each of these categories. For both news services, it was found that the National News category was the most difficult to read with Domestic News second and International News a close third. The easiest subject matter for both services came from the Human Interest News and the Features column.

Dunlap (1951) wanted to investigate whether newspapers could be studied in junior high school classrooms. She chose samples from the Cumberland Evening Times and from Book 8 of the Wonders and Workers, a Scott, Foresman Curriculum Foundation Series reader. After applying the Dale-Chall Readability Formula to each of these samples, she found that the text of the newspapers exhibited a range of readability level from grade 5 through grade 12 with the median at the 9.1 grade level. The text from the reader ranged from grade 5 through grade 15 with median grade level of 9.6. Therefore, the comparable readability levels meant that newspapers could be the topic of study in junior high classrooms.

A historical study on the readability levels of selected 19th century graded readers was undertaken by Nordstrom (1970). Her general conclusion stated that the findings in readability showed that the number of a reader gave only a general indication of its difficulty. No series maintained a uniform progression of difficulty throughout. Furthermore, grade placements obtained ranged

with few exceptions from one to seven grades more difficult than would be expected from the titles of the readers examined.

Portrayal of Female Characters in Literature

Many studies on the roles presented for boys and girls in books have been done using children's materials.

Weitzman and others (1972) focused their study on examining the socialization of preschool children through children's picture books, particularly those that received the Caldecott Award. Other kinds of picture books were also included, and all of them were investigated specifically to determine what characteristics were associated with each sex. Some of the conclusions she reached were:

1. Girls are taught to have low aspirations because so few opportunities are available to them.

2. Girls cannot lead, but rather they need to depend upon boys.

3. Girls rarely play or work together while boys have many other male friends.

The same conclusions are found in the study done by Women on Words and Images, Dick and Jane as Victims (1972). The materials used in this study were 134 readers from 14 primary grade series. The following major conclusions were reached:

1. The ratio of boy-centered stories to girl-centered stories was 5:2.

2. Many boy stories had active mastery themes such as ingenuity, industry, strength, helpfulness, creativity, learning, imaginative play, and curiosity.

3. The girl stories with the themes of passivity, dependence, rehearsal for domesticity, incompetence, victimization, and humiliation, far outnumbered boy stories with similar themes.

4. Males participated in 147 different jobs while women worked in only 26 kinds of jobs.

In general, through illustrations and context, a stereotype of both males and females is being presented to children at a vulnerable age when they lack a critical perspective on themselves and their backgrounds.

Dworkin (1974), Doulan (1972), and Lieberman (1972), have examined the image of women in children's fairy tales. Lieberman's concern for this problem stems from her belief that these tales, though fantasy, still present a world of stereotyped males and females, behavior and psychology, and a way of predicting outcome or fate according to sex which is important because of the intense interest that children take in endings.

All three authors reached the same conclusions. Fairy tales present basically two types of women. First, there is the beautiful young heroine as exemplified by Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, Rapunzel, and others. These characters are helpless, dependent, especially upon men, dull-witted, spiritless, passive, and

naive. Two, in particular, spend most of the story in a coma. They are all rescued by a male through no effort of their own and with the same docility, they marry. The second type of female is aggressive and powerful, and her role is usually that of a witch or a nagging wife or a cruel stepmother. In almost all cases, she is evil; and, as such, she must be punished in the end. Powerful good women do appear in some stories, but they are usually fairies, not humans; and they arrive on the scene only long enough to grant a wish. Good and resourceful females are certainly in short supply.

Using adult materials, Ruggiero and Weston (1975) undertook a study of the major and minor female characters in Gothic novels, a kind of literature that has experienced tremendous growth during these past years. By applying content analyses techniques to 38 Gothic novels, the authors came to some interesting conclusions about the differences in portrayal of women as major from women as minor characters. First, the heroines of Gothic novels tended to be less traditional while the minor characters tended to be more traditional. Heroines usually pursued a career outside of the home and were pictured as independent women who had strong convictions; the minor female characters tended to be housewives, reluctant and intolerant of change or new ideas. Heroines were not usually drawn as physically beautiful. While they certainly were not ugly or even plain, it is the minor female characters who have all the

physical assets. Finally, the heroines range in age from 20 to 30 while the majority of minor characters tended to be either under 20 or over 30.

The study that gives much impetus to future work on the treatment of women in literature was Millett's Sexual Politics (1969). The author defines politics as power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another. Historically, she maintains the males have done the controlling and the females as a group have been oppressed--thus, we have the existence of a patriarchy. By combining her own theory of patriarchy and Engel's theory of capitalism, she concludes that while women are oppressed both in the economic system as well as in the family structure, they are primarily oppressed in the latter situation. Sex is, therefore, a status category with such political implications. The literary reflection of this condition of domination is illustrated by Millett's examination of the works of D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet, all of whom are famous and influential and obviously male writers. In all their works, Millett concludes that the woman is shown as a figure to be dominated largely, as these male authors see it, because she herself desires it and because it is the natural order of things. She is degraded because she is defined solely in terms of her sexual organ and with little input from her emotions or intellect.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

The books chosen to be investigated and the procedures used to obtain the desired information will now be discussed.

The Sample of Books

The novels used in this study comprise the top 10 fiction hardcover best sellers as listed in Publishers' Weekly for the years 1923, 1924, 1933, 1943, 1953, 1963, and 1964 and compiled in Seventy Years of Best Sellers 1895-1965 by Alice Payne Hackett. The best sellers for 1973 and 1974 were taken from the February 1974 and 1975 issues of Publishers' Weekly. The choice of the Publishers' Weekly list was based on the researcher's exposure to the work of Alice Payne Hackett on best sellers. All 60 books will be analyzed for readability levels; and 30 books from the years 1924, 1964, and 1974 will be analyzed for the manner in which female characters are represented in the plot.

An explanation for the choice of novels of 1924, 1964, and 1974, for the examination of content is desirable at this point. The fact that best-seller lists have been kept only since 1895 already restricts possible choices of

time periods for study. The 40-year span between 1924 and 1964 may be a relatively short time to scrutinize for trends or changes in values, but the rapidity with which change occurs should not be underestimated. Further, both periods of time were similar in many ways. Both were times of fairly widespread affluence with young people playing an active role in setting the styles, tone, and values of the times and, consequently, of challenging the old values and traditions, causing much social upheaval. While this brief history is hardly an in-depth analysis of the two periods, the similarity does permit some comparison.

The reasons behind the choice of 1974 as the third time period to examine is that the women's movement has grown and gained strength during the 10 years from 1964 to 1974. Whether or not this growth has had any effect on the values of our society can be partially answered by scrutinizing the best sellers of the present and comparing their content with the content in best sellers of the past.

Since each publication that carries a best-seller list uses its own particular formula for determining this, it is necessary to discuss the background of the Publishers' Weekly best-seller list.

The first best-seller list printed in the United States was in 1895 by Harry Thurston Peck, editor of a literary magazine called The Bookman. Other random lists of best-selling books prior to this date can be found, but they followed no consistent method of assessment or

reporting. Peck canvassed various book dealers in a number of large cities to see which books were selling in large numbers. In 1903, Peck formalized this list to include only the top six best sellers.

The Bookman ceased publication in 1933, but Publishers' Weekly had already been publishing The Bookman's lists since 1899; and around 1919, they began to publish a list based upon its own canvassing of bookstores. Publishers' Weekly also added a nonfiction best-seller list in 1912. This division was dropped shortly thereafter because of small sales; it was reinstated again after the entry of America into World War I. As of 1919, the nonfiction best-seller list has been a permanent feature.

The Publishers' Weekly formula for selecting best-selling novels has remained largely the same over the past 60 years. Obviously, the number of book dealers consulted has increased with the growth of the book-publishing industry in general. The staff at the magazine compiles figures of big selling books from various booksellers in numerous communities across the country though the exact number of such stores is not mentioned. The weekly and monthly lists are compiled from "selected large city bookstores and best-seller lists in newspapers across the United States" (Publishers' Weekly, November 15, 1971). An annual best-seller list is published at the end of January or beginning of February covering both hardcover and paperback books and

is based upon the previous year's sales in bookstores. Sales by book clubs, direct-by-mail, or through other outlets are not counted in compiling the list. While the sales figures are supplied by the publishers, they are often not published because of company policy of not wanting the competition to know exact figures of sales. In the January 22, 1967 issue of Publishers' Weekly, 50 leading bookstores were canvassed while in the January 30, 1966 issue, close to 100 bookstores were sampled.

The novels used in this study are found in the annual fiction hardcover best-seller lists from the Publishers' Weekly and collated by Hackett (1967). She states in her book that the annual lists are primarily for the interest of the retail bookseller. They do not include book club sales or sales in paperbound reprint editions. She contends that the lists are intended to show the reading tastes of the book buyers who actually go to a store to select books. Most of the novels on the annual lists of recent years sell a minimum of about 75,000 copies.

The great majority of books were found in the Firestone Library at Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. Other sources included the Franklin Moore Library at Rider College, Trenton, New Jersey, and the Trenton State College Library at Trenton State College, Trenton, New Jersey as well as the Mercer County Library also in Trenton, New Jersey. Several of the most recent novels were purchased by this researcher in paperback form. Four

books out of the 90 needed for the study were difficult to obtain. Gentleman of Courage (1924) was finally discovered at the New York Public Library in New York City, while Coast of Folly (1924) was found on the shelves at the Free Library in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Candy and You Only Live Twice, both out of print and unavailable at all the above libraries, were located through intensive canvassing of friends and acquaintances.

Construction of the Codesheet

In order to devise a method of examining the treatment of female characters in novels, the researcher developed a Sex Role Codesheet (see Appendix B). Objectively and quantifiably examining literature for particular content has not been widely attempted. Instead, authors have undertaken literary criticisms; and the validity and integrity of such criticism depends largely upon the reputation of the author. An organization called Women on Words and Images (1972) made a good start toward a statistical analysis of sex stereotyping in children's readers. For example, a table was drawn up that listed the number of texts within each series studied indicating which ones and how many featured males or females as central characters. A second table listed the variety of occupations held by males as compared to the number held by females in these same readers. In such a case, statistics on the characteristics of each sexual role can be more easily compiled

since such children's readers have minimal plot lines and character development. Nor is there the problem of dealing with style of writing. Analysis of adult material along these same lines presents more difficulties.

The items of the Sex Role Codesheet have been gleaned from various publications on the topic of women in literature. Millett's Sexual Politics (1969) and Images of Women in Fiction (1972) as well as the study mentioned previously on children's readers served as major contributors of information. A paper by Angrist (1969), "The Study of Sex Roles," was consulted as well as work done by Inge and Donald Broverman (and others--1970) on sex-role stereotypes among college students. The Ruggiero and Weston study (1975) on Gothic novels helped to contribute ideas.

Selection of the Fry Readability Formula

To obtain readability levels for the selected novels, the Fry Readability Formula was used. The advantages of this formula rest on the ease of obtaining a grade placement score and also on its high correlation with other formulae such as the Dale-Chall Formula, which is used usually for intermediate and upper-grade materials (Kistulentz, 1967). A further advantage lies in the measure of vocabulary load as number of syllables in the words of the text itself rather than in the use of a word list which might rate the adult material higher.

Administration of the Fry Readability Formula

In applying the Fry Readability Formula to each of the 10 fiction best-selling novels of the year 1923, 1933, 1943, 1953, 1963, and 1973, the following procedure was used:

1. Three sample passages were randomly selected, and exactly 100 words beginning with the beginning of a sentence were counted out. Numbers were not counted. Proper nouns were counted.

2. The number of sentences in the hundred words were counted estimating the length of the fraction of the last sentence to the nearest 1/10th.

3. The total number of syllables in the 100-word passage was counted.

4. The average of the three samples of sentence length and number of syllables was calculated.

5. The average was then plotted on the graph, and the approximate grade level was determined.

6. If a great deal of variability was found, more sample counts were put into the average.

Summary of Treatment of Data

The Fry Readability Formula was applied to the 10 hardcover fiction best sellers for the years 1923, 1933, 1943, 1953, 1963, and 1973. The individual grade levels of each book were calculated as well as a mean grade level placement for each year. These 60 novels were not read in

entirety to achieve the required statistics.

The novels from 1924, 1964, and 1974 were read this time in entirety; and the items on the codesheet were completed approximately, allowing one such sheet for each principal and for each major supporting female character. The codesheets were collated, and each item was tabulated by the number of items answered similarly.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Two different samples of adult fiction best sellers have been analyzed according to the methods outlined in Chapter III. Since each sample was subjected to a different analysis, the results of this investigation will be presented under the two headings of Readability and Portrayal of Female Characters.

Results of Readability

The Fry Readability Formula was applied to each of 60 adult fiction best sellers. These books represented the top 10 best sellers starting in the year 1923 and proceeding every 10 years up to 1973.

The mean readability score for 1923 was 7.3. Two of the best sellers scored 6th grade in readability while four of the books achieved a rating of 7th grade. Three books rated an 8th grade readability. Only one book was 9th grade in readability, the highest level for that year (see Table 2).

The mean readability score for 1933 was 7.1, which is little lower than the mean for 1923. This year, however, the range of readability levels went from a low of 4th grade to a high again of 9th grade. Two novels rated

TABLE 2

READABILITY LEVELS OF BEST SELLERS
IN 1923

Title of Novel	Readability Level
Black Oxen	9
His Children's Children	7
The Enchanted April	8
Babbitt	8
The Dim Lantern	6
This Freedom	8
The Mine with the Iron Door	7
The Wanderer of the Wasteland	7
The Sea-Hawk	7
The Breaking Point	6
Mean	7.3

this last readability level (see Table 3).

Again, the 1943 mean readability score of 7.5 showed little change from the means of the two previous years. Out of the top 10 best sellers in 1943, the lowest readability level was calculated at 5th grade for only one book. Two books achieved a 9th grade readability; and for the first time, one book was figured to be on the 10th grade level (see Table 4).

In comparison with all the years studied, the best sellers of 1953 rate as the most difficult with a mean of 8.3. The readability scores for the best sellers of 1953 start out at a low of 7th grade with five books scoring this grade level and range up to the 11th grade with only one book figured at that difficulty. Two books did rate a 10th grade reading level (see Table 5).

The mean readability score for 1963 of 8.0 continued to stay near the 1953 mean. The lowest level was that of 6th grade, and it was calculated for two of the novels. Only one book had a 9th grade readability, but two books were calculated as being on the 11th grade level (see Table 6).

In 1973, the mean readability score went back down to 7.4, a level close to those of 1923 through 1943. Again, the lowest level achieved by one book was the 6th grade. Over half of the books figured to be on the 7th grade level, only one book went as high as the 10th grade readability (see Table 7).

TABLE 3

READABILITY LEVELS OF BEST SELLERS
IN 1933

Title of Novel	Readability Level
Anthony Adverse	8
As the Earth Turns	5
Ann Vickers	9
Magnificent Obsession	7
One More River	7
Forgive Us Our Trespasses	8
The Master of Jalna	6
Miss Bishop	8
The Farm	9
Little Man, What Now?	4
Mean	7.1

TABLE 4

READABILITY LEVELS OF BEST SELLERS
IN 1943

Title of Novel	Readability Level
The Robe	8
The Valley of Decision	9
So Little Time	7
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn	6
The Human Comedy	7
Mrs. Parkington	7
The Apostle	10
Hungry Hill	8
The Forest and the Fort	5
The Song of Bernadette	9
Mean	7.5

TABLE 5

READABILITY LEVELS OF BEST SELLERS
IN 1953

Title of Novel	Readability Level
The Robe	8
The Silver Chalice	7
Désirée	7
Battle Cry	7
From Here to Eternity	9
The High and the Mighty	7
Beyond This Place	10
Time and Time Again	11
Lord Vanity	7
The Unconquered	10
	Mean 8.3

TABLE 6

READABILITY LEVELS OF BEST SELLERS
IN 1963

Title of Novel	Readability Level
The Shoes of the Fisherman	7
The Group	11
Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour--An Introduction	8
Caravans	8
Elizabeth Appleton	9
Grandmother and the Priests	7
City of Night	11
The Glass Blowers	8
The Sand Pebbles	6
The Battle of the Villa Florita	6
Mean	8.0

TABLE 7

READABILITY LEVELS OF BEST SELLERS
IN 1973

Title of Novel	Readability Level
Jonathan Livingston Seagull	7
Once Is Not Enough	6
Breakfast of Champions	7
The Odessa File	7
Burr	10
The Hollow Hills	7
Evening in Byzantium	7
The Matlock Paper	8
The Billion Dollar Sure Thing	8
The Honorary Consul	7
Mean	7.4

A comparison of the mean scores of readability levels for each year under study showed little change in scores (see Table 8).

Discussion of Results on Readability

The readability grade level scores, using the Fry Readability Formula, that were calculated for the novels are only an approximation of the reading difficulty of those books. These grade scores provide a great deal of information, however. First the distribution of scores follows the bell curve as one might expect with the majority of scores in the middle of the distribution (see Figure 2).

Furthermore, while the best-seller lists of 1943 and 1953 exhibited the highest means, 8.3 and 8.0 respectively, these means do not differ from each other in any sizable amount nor do they differ from any of the other means to any appreciable extent (see Figure 3). The great similarity in the mean scores tends to indicate that the general reading level of the best sellers over the past 60 years has remained very much the same. While in some lists, notably those of 1953 and 1963, some novels do have a readability score of 10th and 11th grade, these are exceptions whose effect when averaged in with the other readability levels is little felt.

TABLE 8

MEAN READABILITY LEVELS OF THE BEST SELLERS, 1923-1973

Year of Best Seller	Mean Readability Level
1923	7.3
1933	7.1
1943	7.5
1953	8.3
1963	8.0
1973	7.4

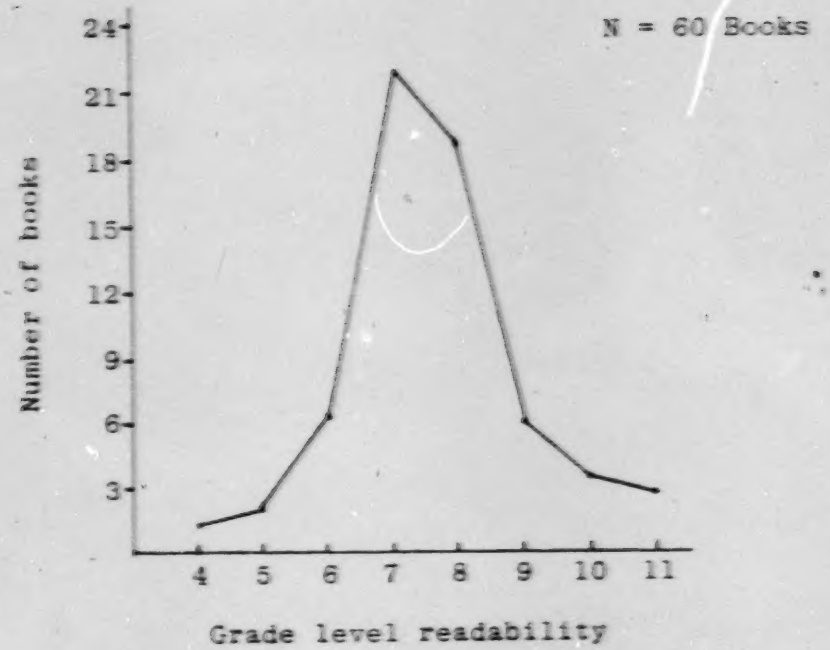

Figure 2. Distribution of readability levels of best sellers, 1923-1973.

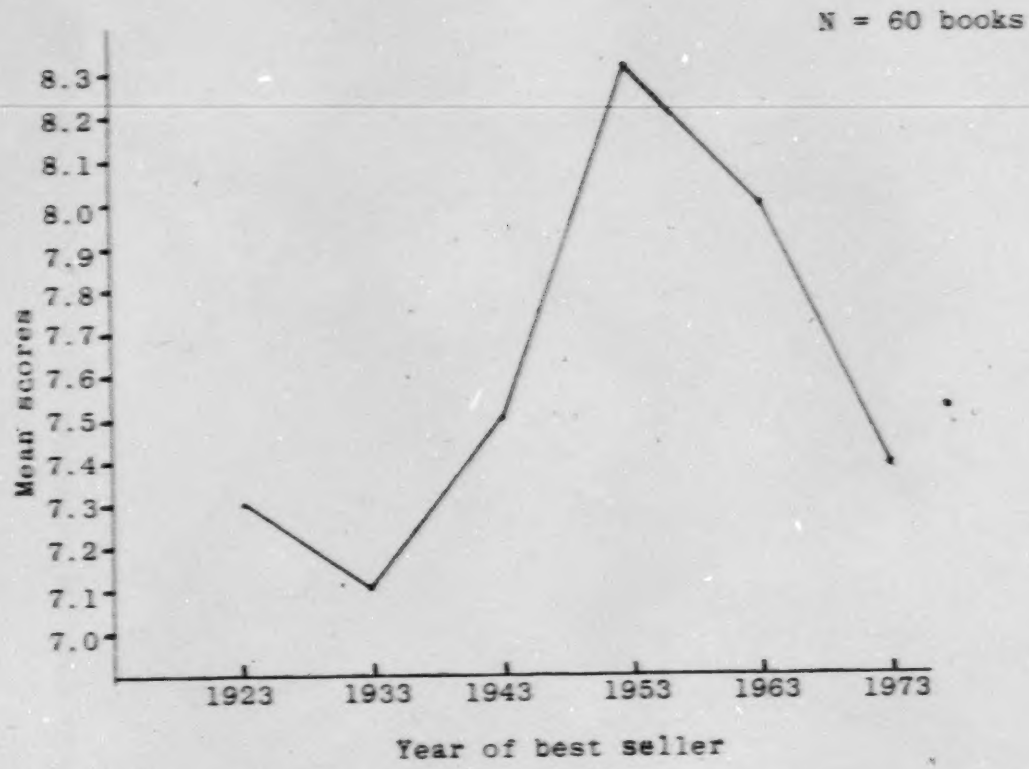

Figure 3. Distribution of mean scores of readability of best sellers, 1923-1973.

Portrayal of Female Characters

The analysis of best sellers for the manner in which they present female characters will be broken down into the following headings which correspond to the headings on the Sex Role Codesheet (Appendix B).

1. Number of books containing principal or major supporting female characters.

2. Relationship between the principal and major supporting female characters and the principal male character.

3. Economic characteristics of the principal and major supporting female characters.

4. Social characteristics of the principal and major supporting female characters.

5. Sexual behavior of the principal and major supporting female characters.

6. Intellectual characteristics of the principal and major supporting female characters.

7. Change experienced by the principal and major supporting female characters.

The data will be presented under the appropriate headings. At the end of this presentation, a section entitled Discussion will include a summary of the data and an examination of possible trends over the three years under study.

Number of Books Containing Principal or Major Supporting Female Characters

Out of the 10 best sellers for the year 1924, seven of the novels used females as principal characters in the plot. It is obvious from the titles of three of these seven books--Mistress Wilding, The Homemaker, and The Little French Girl that this is so. The remaining four titles include So Big, Gentleman of Courage, Call of the Canyon, and Coast of Folly. All seven of these novels employ one female character around whom the plot centers and who, through some action of her own, contributes in great measure to the central conflict of the novel. Two examples that show diversity of plot are Coast of Folly and So Big. In Coast of Folly, the heroine Joyce is accused by a wife of having an affair with that wife's husband. The story focuses on Joyce's reactions to this charge, as well as her reactions to those around her who have also heard the rumors, especially Joyce's rich and conservative grandfather. The main character in So Big is followed as she develops from a young girl forced to support herself by teaching after her father's death through her marriage to a less than successful farmer to her own takeover and rehabilitation of the farm (as a widow) into a thriving financial enterprise.

Major supporting female characters are found in five of the best sellers from 1924. In Heirs Apparent, the hero's search for a meaning to his life revolves around two

women whose life-styles and values represent the two extremes between which he vacillates. The third major supporting female character, his sister, ultimately presents him with the solution to his problem through the lessons of her own troubles.

Two novels of the remaining four from 1924 have two major supporting female characters--So Big and The Midlander. The Little French Girl and This Plastic Age each have one major supporting female.

It is necessary to point out that two of the novels in 1924 contain both a principal female character and at least one major supporting female character. In So Big, the principal female character is the mother of the hero while the two major supporting females are the women with whom he is romantically involved. Similarly, the heroine of The Little French Girl is the principal female character; and her mother plays a major supporting role. Only these two books out of the 30 studied present women in both roles.

In 1964, only two of the 10 best sellers presented females as major characters. Candy, a spoof on American sexual mores, recounts the adventures of a precocious young girl in search of her missing father. The second book, This Rough Magic, is an example, not too often seen on the best-seller lists in spite of increasing sales, of the Gothic novel in which a young woman risking physical harm solves a mystery that threatens the man she loves.

Major supporting female characters are found in six of the 10 novels of 1964. In The Spy Who Came in From the Cold, Herzog, and You Only Live Twice, there is only one such female. Armageddon tells a story set in postwar Germany of two German sisters both of whom survived the war each in her own way and both of whom search for a new way to survive the peace. The Man and The Convention are both political novels centering on men in positions of political power, and the supporting female characters are the relatives and secretaries that are necessary in perpetuating that power.

Unlike the 1924 best sellers, two of the novels in 1964 contain neither principal nor major supporting female characters. The Rector of Justin tells of the reminiscences of a man for the head of the boys school which he attended as a youth. Similarly, there are no females in The Martyred, a story of the persecution of Christian ministers in Communist North Korea in the 1940's and 1950's.

The novels of 1974 present a situation similar to that of 1964. Again, only two novels contain major female characters. The wife in Something Happened is obviously a key to the hero's problems; while in The Fan Club, an actress/sex symbol who is kidnapped by men wanting to seduce her must devise a way to escape her captors.

There are four major supporting female characters in the 1974 novel Centennial. The reason for such a large number lies in the kind of story told by the book--a story

that traces the development and settlement of the area around Colorado from prehistoric times to its first inhabitants, the Indians, to the present day. The plot in Jaws used one woman, the wife of the hero police officer, in a major supporting role, though this role did not influence the major conflict, that of catching the shark, in any way. Finally, The Pirate presented one major supporting female character in the role of the young Western wife of the hero, a rich Arab sheik; the symbolic purpose of the wife is to represent the confrontation and conflict of the old and traditional vs. the new and modern that is characteristic of the societies of the Middle East today.

In 1974, five novels attempted little or no portrayal of females at all. Watership Down, while dealing with rabbits instead of humans, assigned the masculine gender to the important characters with the female rabbits hardly included. Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy and Dogs of War dealt exclusively with men in foreign intrigue and international politics. I Heard the Owl Call My Name presents the story of a young priest who learns the meaning of death from the Indians among whom he preaches. Finally, The Seven Per Cent Solution presents the character of Sigmund Freud investigating a less noble aspect of Sherlock Holmes' character.

Thus, over the three-year period under study, the number of novels portraying women in important roles has declined (see Table 9).

TABLE 9

NUMBER OF BEST SELLERS BY YEAR THAT CONTAIN PRINCIPAL OR MAJOR SUPPORTING FEMALE CHARACTERS
N = 30 BOOKS

Year of Best Seller	No. of Books Containing Principal Female Characters	No. of Books Containing Major Supporting Female Characters	No. of Books Containing No Females of Any Consequences
1924*	7	5	0
1964	2	6	2
1974	2	3	5

*Two of the novels of this year contained both major supporting and principal female characters.

It is also revealing to examine the sex of the authors of the best sellers from each year. In 1924, three out of the 10 authors on the list were women. Only one woman authored a best seller in 1964. In 1974, one author out of the 10 was female; however, the book she wrote, I Heard the Owl Call My Name, did not contain any major female characters. Of the books in 1974 that did portray women in principal or major supporting roles, none was authored by a woman.

Relationship of Female Characters to Principal Male Character

In 1924, the most common relationship of principal or major supporting female characters to principal male character was that of friend-sweetheart. More specifically, the male and female were friends at the beginning of the story; the resolution of the plot usually brought about their betrothal. Six of the best sellers featured this particular kind of relationship. Two of the best sellers, The Midlander and So Big, included relationships that could be called "only friends." In both cases, one person in the relationship clearly felt more deeply about the other but nothing more ever came of it.

A marital arrangement was found in three of the novels while in So Big and The Heirs Apparent, the relationship between male and female was that of lovers. It is important to note that in both novels the heroes were single while both of the females were married to older men

and were thus guilty of adultery.

Finally, the three remaining female characters were related to the major male character. So Big involved a mother and son, The Heirs Apparent included a brother and sister, and The Little French Girl focused on the relationship between a future mother-in-law and her daughter's fiancé.

Out of the eight novels in 1964 that included female characters of importance, three of these novels employed plot lines which did not allow a specific relationship to exist between certain female characters and the principal male character. For example, the hero in Armageddon has an affair with a woman. Her sister is a major supporting character, yet this sister never even meets the hero because of the details of the story.

The most common relationship in the best sellers of 1964 was that of lovers. This sexual liaison was found in three novels. The employer-employee relationship accounted for two of the female characters. The remaining three females related to the males in the novels as fiancée, daughter-in-law, and ex-wife.

The best sellers of 1974 presented a much narrower view of the female-male relationship. Out of the total of eight female characters, seven were portrayed as wives. The nature of the relationship between the remaining female character and the major supporting males was that of idol and fans.

Economic Characteristics of Principal and Major Supporting Female Characters

What then do the female characters in the best sellers do? From where or whom do they receive their money?

The best sellers of 1924 portray a large number of female characters who come from a wealthy background and, therefore, have no occupation (not even that of homemaker which comes under the category of profession). The principal female characters in Mistress Wilding, Coast of Folly, Call of the Canyon, and The Little French Girl are in such a position. The same is true of the major supporting characters in The Midlanders, The Heirs Apparent, The Little French Girl, The Plastic Age, and So Big. This is not the entire picture, however. In So Big, the principal female character is shown as both a capable schoolteacher and farmer, while a supporting female is portrayed as a dedicated and famous painter. The supporting female in This Plastic Age is wealthy and attends college. The title of the book, The Homemaker, indicates the occupation of the heroine though the story concludes with her going on to become a successful salesperson and department head in a clothing store. Finally, the young heroine of A Gentleman of Courage is preparing herself for a role as a homemaker.

In the case of the previously discussed wealthy women, all of them (11 in number) relied on either their

husband's or their father's income for their life-styles. Only one major supporting female character supported herself, and the purpose of her job was clearly to pursue a career. Four of the female characters were breadwinners for their families.

Two of the major supporting females worked outside the home for a nonprofit organization, specifically the Red Cross. Yet, the responsibility for maintaining a home and caring for children was assigned to only four of the total 16 female characters under study. In the case of four other female characters, this responsibility was definitely not theirs. For the remaining eight characters, no specific answer could be made concerning home and children largely because the plots of the novels did not concern themselves with that particular aspect.

It is not surprising that 11 of the female characters under study came from the upper-economic class while five came from the middle class and only one came from the lower class.

The income of the females in the 1964 best sellers dropped dramatically. The heroine of Candy was a college girl whose source of finances was assumed to be her family. In This Rough Magic, the heroine was an unemployed actress who must then support herself; but there was some intimation that her family was financially comfortable.

Among the major supporting female characters in the books of 1964, there is much similarity. The ex-wife of

Herzog went back to graduate school, and one of the major supporting characters in The Man had just graduated from college and was looking for a job. Both of these characters presumably received financial support from a husband and a father, respectively. The female character in The Spy Who Came in From the Cold supported herself from her job as a librarian and was also a Communist Party member. Again, Armageddon, The Man, and Convention have a great deal in common, for the jobs held by women in all three books are mainly that of secretary and homemaker. Probably the most exotic profession held by any woman in all of the 23 novels under study is that of a pearl diver, the job of the supporting and necessary female to James Bond in You Only Live Twice.

The female characters in 1964 novels were more independent than those of 1924. Seven females supported themselves; only three out of the seven were actually pursuing a career as opposed to seeking financial security. On the other hand, four of the female characters relied on their husband's or father's income for support. As in 1924, a small number of characters (two) worked for nonprofit groups outside their home or job. Interestingly, both organizations were political ones--the Communist Party and an unnamed establishment political party.

Again, as in 1924, the domestic responsibilities are not discussed in the cases of half of the female characters. The question is just not applicable. However, for

three female characters, it is clear that they are responsible for taking care of the home and the children.

The best sellers of 1964 do attempt to portray a more middle-class group of women than those of 1924. Only two of the females can be labelled as upper class while the lower class is not represented at all.

The small number of books portraying females in 1974 narrows the variety of occupation and therefore of the economic position considerably. The females in Jaws and in Something Happened are both homemakers and thus depend upon their husbands for financial support. While the women characters in Centennial are homemakers, they are also much more; and so the label of frontierwoman was chosen to hopefully incorporate all those additional responsibilities. In The Pirate, we are again presented by a woman who is rich and has no occupation; on the other hand, the heroine of The Fan Club is quite financially successful in her occupation as an actress.

The lack of financial independence of the female characters in the novels of 1974 is more striking than in the 1924 best sellers. While the characters in the 1974 novels were not wealthy like the women in the 1924 novels, the large majority (seven out of nine characters) relied upon their husbands or fathers for financial support. Only one female worked to support herself. The purpose of her job was to pursue a career.

Unlike the novels of 1924 and 1964, the plots of

six of the 1974 novels make clear the fact that the responsibility for taking care of the home and children rests upon the female character. This result is not surprising in light of the fact that seven of the nine characters are portrayed in the role of the wife. Only in two cases is this question not applicable.

The economic status of the female characters in 1974 novels was well mixed. Two characters represented the upper class, three represented the middle class, and two females came from the lower class. In the case of one particular female character, an Indian woman in Centennial, this question did not apply.

Social Characteristics of Principal and Major Supporting Female Characters

In 1924, out of the seven novels that had females as principal characters, five of these females were presented as young women in their early 20's. On the other hand, the heroine of The Homemaker was probably in her 30's, already having had three children, the oldest of whom was about 11. The remaining novel, So Big, traced the growth and aging of its heroine from a young girl to an old woman with an adult son.

This same pattern of ages is also true of those novels in 1924 that had major supporting female characters. Four of the novels portrayed a total of six women again in their early 20's. The Heirs Apparent had an additional female character who was an older woman in her 30's.

Finally, like So Big, The Midlander followed the fortunes of two supporting females from their youth to their old age.

Out of the seven principal characters, three were married and four were single. Three of the nine major supporting female characters were married. Five of the females were single, and one was widowed. Out of the total of six married women, five had children.

The data on educational background of the female characters in 1924 novels showed some variety. For eight female characters, there was no mention made of previous education. Grade school or less was indicated for two females. While three females were portrayed as having attended college, another three female characters were described as having graduated from college.

This variety can be seen again when discussing the social lives of the female characters. Seven of the females had close female friends, while seven women definitely did not have such friends. More females had close male friends than female friends. Interestingly, the question of sharing a social life as a couple did not apply to 12 of the characters. Even though six of the women were married, only one woman attended functions with her husband. Again, even though five of the women had children, the exchange between parent and child did not apply to 12 of the female characters. Only two women clearly passed any expectancies on to their children.

Social conventions were conformed to by slightly more than half of the female characters. That means, of course, that the remaining seven women were nonconformists. Whatever their attitude toward society, however, the great majority of women, 13 specifically, were successful in their endeavors. Only three females did not experience success.

Attending social functions was by far the most common leisure-time activity. Actually, for most of the female characters, especially the wealthy ones, social functions occupied almost all of their time.

In the two best sellers of 1964 with principal female characters, both women were young. While the heroine of Candy was in her late teens or perhaps early 20's (since she was a college girl), the heroine of This Rough Magic was close by at the other end of her 20's, though she was portrayed as being wise beyond her years.

Interestingly, the major supporting female characters in the novels of 1964 are not clearly delineated as far as their age is concerned. One female character, the daughter-in-law of the hero in The Convention, was probably in her 20's. The remaining eight supporting female characters were somewhere in their 30's or perhaps in their 40's but certainly not any older. This suggestion comes from the particular roles they play in the novels--for example, the wife in Herzog must be in her 40's

since the hero is 49.

In the best sellers of 1964, both principal heroines were single. Even in considering the major supporting characters at this time, eight were single, while only two were married, and one was divorced. The two married women both had children.

The data on social characteristics of the female roles in 1964 is similar to that in novels of 1924. The 1964 books did not mention educational background for six of the female characters. The remaining characters were well educated, however. Three attended college, one graduated from college, and one was attending graduate school.

Ten of the female characters had neither close male or female friends; and in the case of eight of the characters, the question was inapplicable. Three women had close female friends, and only one woman had close male acquaintances. Again, as in 1924, the question of having a social life as a couple was inapplicable to a large majority of the female characters.

The plot lines of 1964 best sellers reflected a split in social conformity with half the females pictured as following society's mores and half being more rebellious. Again, like 1924, all the women were successful in their endeavors except for one woman. Even though two of the characters had children, the question of passing on expectations to children was inapplicable to all the characters.

While attending social gatherings was still a favorite leisure-time activity, for seven of the female characters, it was impossible to determine what was done during free time.

Some ambiguity concerning age occurs in the novels of 1974. In Something Happened, the principal female was again the wife of the hero who the author states was in his 40's and so she must be close by. The heroine of The Fan Club was hinted at being in her early 30's though so much emphasis is placed on her outstanding physical attributes that she seemed much younger.

As far as major supporting female characters are concerned, the woman in Jaws and the female in The Pirate were also hinted to be in their 30's. Centennial, on the other hand, like two of the previous novels, traced women from youth through old age assuming they lived that long--which they did not.

As for marital status, the best sellers of 1974 which portray principal female characters split with one heroine married and the other one single. The six major supporting females were all married. Five of these women had children.

In only one novel of 1974 was educational background of female characters mentioned. The orphan in Centennial was receiving the equivalent of a grade-school education at the time of her departure from the orphanage.

Five of the female characters in the 1974 novels

had close female friends while only one had a close male friend. Wives tended to stick with their husbands in their social lives unlike the female characters from the novels of 1924 and 1964. In general, six of the characters conformed to society's expectations. Furthermore, five out of the six clearly passed these expectations on to their children.

Success in their endeavors was determined for only five characters who were judged to be successful. The outcome for the three remaining females was unclear.

Again, as in 1924 and 1964, the prime leisure-time activity was attending social functions; but the question itself was inapplicable to four of the female characters studied.

Sexual Behavior of Principal and Major Supporting Female Characters

On the whole, the female characters in the best sellers of 1924 exhibited a variety of sexual behaviors. To begin with, however, it is necessary to note that the sexuality of four of the female characters under study was not discussed by the author. In the case of five of the characters, sexuality was described in a more abstract manner. This meant that the heroines, while not actively engaging in sexual acts, did discuss their feelings about sex and future marital responsibilities. Usually this discussion represented rebellion against the mores of the previous generation. If any sexual behavior was actually

exhibited, it was of the "romantic embrace" variety.

Some of the female characters in 1924 novels did more than talk. Two of them had sex only with their husband while two did not restrict themselves in this way. One female had several affairs at one time, and two women experienced premarital sex with no assumption of marriage. It is quite revealing to note that out of five characters, only two experienced guilt over their sexual activities. Furthermore, out of these five, four of the characters initiated the sexual activity.

Only one of the female characters in 1964 best sellers was not described in sexual terms. Five of the females initiated sexual activity with only one character succumbing to male pressures. Only one of the characters felt guilty about the experience. One woman had several affairs and three had premarital affairs with no expectation of marriage. It is important to note that one of the best sellers from 1964, Candy, presented a female as the principal character of the book. Yet, her role was strictly that of a sex object. In keeping with the aim of the book (to spoof American sexual mores), she bounced from one male to the other. The only goal the men had was to seduce her; yet, her naiveté prevented her from seeing this true motive.

In the best sellers of 1974, the author did not discuss the sexuality of three of the female characters in Centennial even though they were married. Out of the

remaining four females whose role was that of a wife, two had sex only with their husbands. The other two had extramarital affairs, but only one of them felt guilty about it. Guilt was also experienced by another female character. The one single woman in the 1974 novel was raped several times by each of three kidnappers until she decided to use sex as a weapon against them, feeling no guilt in doing so. As in 1964, one of the 1974 best sellers presented a female character as a means only of introducing sex into the plot. The woman in Jaws had no connection with or effect upon the conflict of the story.

Intellectual Characteristics of Principal and Major Supporting Females

When it came to expressing their ideas, the female characters in the best sellers of 1924 were quite vocal. Eleven females discussed their opinions on various topics while only three women restricted their thinking to mainly the home and to their children. In the case of two female characters, the question was inapplicable.

Implicit goals were discernible in the actions and feelings of five of the characters. The general aim of these women was to achieve a sense of meaning and of beauty in life and to impart these values to others. When it came to more explicit goals, the most common desire was to support one's family. Having a good time and helping the hero solve his problem were the next two most common goals.

As was discussed in the section on social

characteristics, most of the female characters (12) were successful in achieving their goals. Three females were partly successful, and one was unsuccessful.

In the novels of 1964, female characters were portrayed again as fairly outspoken. Ten of the women expressed a variety of opinions outside topics restricted to home and children.

While three of the female characters sought to achieve a sense of identity and personal meaning to their own lives, the most common goal in the novels of this year was the desire to help the principal male to solve a problem or to avoid misfortune. Six of the characters were successful in their attempts to fulfill their goals while two were partly successful. Three women, however, were unsuccessful.

All of the female characters in 1974 expressed their opinions on many questions. Again, the most common goal of the women was to achieve a sense of purpose in their lives and to establish an identity. This type of goal is more inner directed and more personal than most of the goals discussed in the previous years. Only four of the women were successful. Two were unsuccessful, and two others were only partly successful.

Changes Experienced by Principal or Major Supporting Female Characters

The great majority of female characters in the novels of all three years under study underwent some sort of change.

In the novels of 1924, change was experienced by 14 of the 16 female characters studied. The most common area in which this change occurred was in social status. Five characters went from being single to being affianced, one went from being single to being married, and another female went the opposite way, that is from being married to being separated to being reconciled. Sexual status also changed since two women became more respectable at the end of the novel than they had been at the beginning. One female lost her virginity. Change was also experienced in the economic conditions of the female characters. Two characters progressed from being poor to being more financially secure. One character went the other way.

Eight of the female characters in novels from 1964 underwent changes in their lives. Two women became engaged while one was divorced. Economically, two characters changed from being financially comfortable to being destitute to financially surviving. Three other characters underwent social changes.

Marital and sexual changes were the most common changes undergone by five females in the 1974 best sellers. Three women experienced little or no change at all.

Economically, one character went from middle to upper class while another female ended her life because of her worsening financial condition. The marital status and sexual status changed for three of the characters who rededicated themselves to their husband's happiness.

Discussion of Results on Portrayal of Female Characters

One of the most striking aspects of the data on female roles in the novels of all three years, 1924, 1964, and 1974, is the decreasing number of books that depict women in major roles. Over half of the best sellers in 1924 featured women as principal characters; whereas in 1974, only two out of the total of five books that presented woman at all contained important roles for women. Two of the 1924 novels even had both principal and major supporting female characters in the plot line. The earlier best sellers included more major female characters, largely because their plots tended to center on a romantic boy-meets-girl story. Evidence for this point can be found in the large number of male-female relationships that can be described as that of friends, sweethearts, and lovers. The plots in the novels of 1964 and 1974 portrayed more women in supporting roles to the male characters who are the initiators of the action in the story. The variety in relationships also decreased in these years. In 1974, in almost all of the cases the principal relationship was that of wife. In addition, the number of women writing

best sellers decreased over the three years studied. In 1974, none of the books analyzed was written by a woman.

Economically, the conditions of the female characters have not changed much. By and large, most out of the total number of female characters depended upon their husband or father for financial support. While some female characters were depicted as working at a job outside the home, only a small number actively pursued a career. The kinds of occupations held by these women were similar in all three years; furthermore, these jobs conform to the popular female stereotype. The roles of homemaker and secretary drew the largest number of characters. Three females were pictured as college students, while two characters were actresses. One character each filled the job of maid, schoolteacher, farmer, painter, librarian, and pearl diver.

The preoccupation of the 1924 novels with the wealthier upper class was restricted to that year. The two remaining years presented stories that deal more with the middle class.

It is important to point out that the data on responsibility for taking care of home and children is not clear. In the case of half of the female characters, this question was inapplicable. For most of the remaining characters, this responsibility was assumed to be theirs. This affirmation was not, however, restricted only to married females. In the 1924 best sellers, many of the

wealthy married women with children rarely saw their children; while in the Call of the Canyon (1924) the hero makes perfectly clear to his sweetheart that her duty will be to raise his children and keep his home.

Again, in the novels of all three years, the majority of the female characters, 24 in all, were in their 20's and 30's. Four characters were in their late teens or early 20's, while only two were in their 40's. None was older than 50. Only three novels attempted to follow the development and growth of their female characters from youth to middle or old age.

Marital status was divided almost equally in terms of total number of female characters married or single. In 1964 best sellers, a large number of the characters (10 out of 11) were single; while in 1974, every female character but one was married.

For over half of the characters in all 23 novels, no mention of educational background was made by the author. This omission was especially true for the females in the 1974 novels in which none of the characters except one has any kind of clearly-stated educational background. The remaining half of the female characters were generally well educated with most of them having at least attended college.

Attending social functions was by far the most popular leisure-time activity especially in the plots of the 1924 best sellers. Except for the 1974 novels, most of the

female characters shared both male and female friends. Relationships with children were generally not discussed by authors, although the wives in the 1974 novels tended to show more concern for the values being passed on to their children.

A variety of sexual behavior was evident from the data, but no clear trend could be discerned. Quite a few of the female characters initiated their sexual activity and did not feel guilty about their sex lives. Extramarital and premarital affairs were experienced by several characters. It is important to note, however, that for eight out of the total of 35 characters, no mention was made of their sexuality by the author. In the case of seven more female characters, the authors alluded to their sexuality in more abstract romantic and emotional terms instead of in terms of actual physical experiences. In two of the novels, the female characters were presented largely as sex objects.

Almost all of the female characters expressed opinions on topics of interest outside of home and children. The most common goals exhibited by the females were to help raise and support their family and to aid the hero in escaping misfortune and achieving his own goal. Quite a few females were seeking also the more implicit goals of achieving a meaningful life, establishing their identity and appreciating the true beauty in life. This last point is true of the female characters in all three time periods.

Again, almost all of these women were successful or at least partly successful in attaining their goals.

The female characters in the novels of each year underwent similar kinds of changes. Changes in marital status were probably the most common ones, but economic changes also occurred for a large number of characters. These changes left almost all of the females in 1924 novels happier than before the change; while in the books from 1964 and 1974, the results were closely split between characters who were happier and those who were unhappier after the change.

Comparison of Findings

In his investigation of readability levels of best sellers from 1662 to 1945, Craig (1953) found that the scores ranged from a low of 5.2 to a high of 14.8 with a median difficulty of 10.8. In addition, the median grade levels for 50-year periods varied from 9.3 to 11.1. Several reasons can be advanced for the differences in results between Craig's study and this study. First, Craig used the Yoakam Readability Formula which is primarily a measure of vocabulary difficulty. Second, the population of books analyzed by Craig represented the absolute top best sellers of a period. Finally, he did not examine books published after 1945.

As for portrayal of female characters, much of what Hart (1950) wrote about novels of the 19th century seems

to apply to the 1924 best sellers. The "feminine fifties" (Hart, 1950, p. 92) was a term used to describe a period during which fiction emphasized the woman's role and her particular needs. Female characters appeared in increasing number in this literature. Unlike 1924, however, most of the novels from the 1850's were also written by women.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Best sellers were examined in order to shed more light on the books themselves as to difficulty and content.

Summary

There are two basic questions underlying this present study: (1) what do these books tell us about the reading levels of a large part of the population over a 50-year period?, and (2) what kind of a picture of women did these books present in three specific periods in our history?

The answer to the first question can be found in the readability scores for the best sellers of the years 1923-1973, taken every 10 years. Out of the total of 60 books, the lowest grade level calculated for any of the novels was 4th grade; and it applied to a novel in the year 1933. The most frequent grade level was that of 7th grade, and it was figured for 22 of the best sellers. Four of the best sellers rated a 10th grade readability score with the first of these novels appearing on the 1943 best-seller list. The highest level scored was that of 11th grade; three books since 1953 were judged to be on that level.

In addition, the mean average readability scores did not vary to any appreciable extent for the 50-year period--usually hovering around the 7th grade level.

As an answer to the second question concerning the kind of portrayal of women in 1924, 1964, and 1974, the following conclusions can be cited:

1. In spite of the growth of the feminist movement, the most recent best-seller list showed half of the novels containing no principal or major supporting females. All of the novels on the 1924 best-seller lists contained female characters who were important to the plot of the book.

2. A large number of characters, especially in the 1924 best-seller list, were portrayed as coming from wealthy homes and thereby having no steady occupation. A majority of all the female characters relied on a husband or a father for financial support. Occupations held by the characters that did work tended to be ones typically associated with women.

3. Most of the total of female characters were portrayed as young women. The results on marital status showed an almost equal split between number of single and married women.

4. No major differences existed in the sexual behavior between the females in the novels from the three different years. The sexual experiences of the characters in the 1974 novels were described in more detail than in previous years. Although the sex experiences of about

half of the women characters were not discussed by the author, out of the total number of women for all three years who did engage in sex, a large number initiated this activity and tended not to feel guilty about it. Two of the female characters, one in 1964 and one in 1974, were portrayed primarily for sex interest.

5. Expressing their opinions was characteristic of almost all of the female characters. They were as a group successful in achieving their goals.

6. Most of the characters underwent changes during the course of the story. A different marital status was the most common development experienced. Changes in the areas of sexual status, economic status, and social status were also evident. The novels of 1924 tended to be of the "happy ending" variety as evidenced by the large number of female characters who were happier after the particular change. In the novels of 1964 and 1974, an equal number of women were happier and unhappier after the change.

Conclusions

The reading difficulty of most best sellers has not changed much over a 50-year period according to the results of this study. While some individual books have higher reading levels in the later years, there seems to be no trend toward more difficult reading matter in general. Several possible explanations exist. Perhaps authors, in an attempt to gain financial success and personal fame,

write the kind of novel that they think will sell to the largest number of people. Best-seller lists are influential in determining the choices people make both in libraries and in bookstores. Therefore, to get one's book on that list would almost assure success not only for that novel but for any other books that author might produce later on. Many writers such as Irving Wallace have been accused of just such a tactic--of producing a "formula" book.

Other influences besides the best-seller lists exist which shape the reading interests of the public. The amount of time and money committed by publishers to advertising a particular publication can greatly affect the number of readers. Fear of Flying by Erica Jong is a good example of this point. In addition, the making of a novel into a movie can greatly influence sales of that book. The best seller, Jaws, is another good example of both of these points.

On the other hand, however, perhaps the educational preparation of the public has not been intensive enough to yield not only readers capable of reading higher-level material but also readers desiring to read more challenging material. Perhaps after the demands of making a living and coping with the various frustrations that that entails, the average person, though capable of more challenging material, wishes only to escape into a good story. This idea is borne out by the large number of spy stories

and adventure stories on the best-seller lists.

As for the portrayal of female characters in these best sellers, it would appear from the selective sampling done for this paper that the feminist movement has not generated much popular interest in either reading about women or in helping female authors achieve more prominence. The fact that half of the books on the best-seller list in 1974 have no important female roles is amazing, especially when one considers that women are usually the library goers and book buyers. It is clear that a good story in 1924 was considered to be one that involved the male--female struggle within the larger context of the struggle to find meaning in life. It is necessary to note that these female characters were not particularly liberated females nor did they represent the majority of the female population. The female characters were upper class and financially secure, and they were for the most part young and attractive. Nonetheless, women did play an important part in the plots of the novels. Two of the novels in 1924 did deal more realistically with the struggle that a large number of women face in raising a family and at the same time finding an outlet for their creativity.

While the female characters in 1964 and 1974 were more middle class, they also tended to have more limited and narrow supporting roles in relation to the principal male characters. There is no female equivalent on any of the three lists to the middle aged self-examination of the

hero in Herzog (1964) or in Something Happened (1974). The possibilities for women became even more restricted in 1974 novels. One could conclude from these later novels that men still run the business of the world, and women still cheer them on from the sidelines.

Suggestions for Further Research

For a better picture of any possible trends in readability or any changes in the portrayal of women, it would be extremely helpful to examine the books on best-seller lists from other years than the ones used in this study. Also, one could use best-seller lists from other publications. For example, the probable appearance of Fear of Flying by Erica Jong on the 1975 best-seller list would change the conclusions on the portrayal of women in best sellers.

The publication of nonfiction is growing rapidly and would thus be a good source of information on readability.

One could do more research on the portrayal of female characters by comparing the portrayal of female characters in best sellers with the portrayal of female characters in books that are not best sellers and that have specifically feminist titles.

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APPENDIX A

BEST-SELLER LISTS

BEST SELLERS BY YEAR AS THEY APPEARED IN HACKETT (1967) AND PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY

1923

1. Black Oxen, by Gertrude Atherton. Boni & Liveright
2. His Children's Children, by Arthur Train. Scribner
3. The Enchanted April, by "Elizabeth." Doubleday, Page
4. Babbitt, by Sinclair Lewis. Harcourt, Brace
5. The Dim Lantern, by Temple Bailey. Penn Publishing Co.
6. This Freedom, by A. S. M. Hutchinson. Little, Brown
7. The Mine with the Iron Door, by Harold Bell Wright Appleton.
8. The Wanderer of the Wasteland, by Zane Grey. Harper
9. The Sea-Hawk, by Rafael Sabatini. Houghton Mifflin
10. The Breaking Point, by Mary Roberts Rinehart. Doran

1924

1. So Big, by Edna Ferber. Doubleday, Page
2. The Plastic Age, by Percy Marks. Century
3. The Little French Girl, by Anne Douglas Sedgwick. Houghton Mifflin
4. The Heirs Apparent, by Philip Gibbs. Doran
5. A Gentleman of Courage, by James Oliver Curwood. Cosmopolitan Book Co.
6. The Call of the Canyon, by Zane Grey. Harper
7. The Midlander, by Booth Tarkington. Doubleday, Page
8. The Coast of Folly, by Coningsby Dawson. Cosmopolitan Book Co.
9. Mistress Wilding, by Rafael Sabatini. Houghton Mifflin
10. The Homemaker, by Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Harcourt, Brace

1933

1. Anthony Adverse, by Hervey Allen. Farrar & Rinehart
2. As the Earth Turns, by Gladys Hasty Carroll. Macmillan
3. Ann Vickers, by Sinclair Lewis. Doubleday, Doran
4. Magnificent Obsession, by Lloyd C. Douglas. Willett, Clark
5. One More River, by John Galsworthy. Scribner
6. Forgive Us Our Trespasses, by Lloyd C. Douglas. Houghton Mifflin
7. The Master of Jalna, by Mazo de la Roche. Little, Brown

8. Miss Bishop, by Bess Streeter Aldrich. Appleton-Century
9. The Farm, by Louis Bromfield. Harper
10. Little Man What Now?, by Hans Fallada. Simon & Schuster

1943

1. The Robe, by Lloyd C. Douglas. Houghton Mifflin
2. The Valley of Decision, by Marcia Davenport. Scribner
3. So Little Time, by John P. Marquand. Little, Brown
4. A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, by Betty Smith. Harper
5. The Human Comedy, by William Saroyan. Harcourt, Brace
6. Mrs. Parkington, by Louis Bromfield. Harper
7. The Apostle, by Sholem Asch. Putnam
8. Hungry Hill, by Daphne du Maurier. Doubleday, Doran
9. The Forest and the Fort, by Hervey Allen. Farrar & Rinehart
10. The Song of Bernadette, by Franz Werfel. Viking Press

1953

1. The Robe, by Lloyd C. Douglas. Houghton Mifflin
2. The Silver Chalice, by Thomas B. Costain. Doubleday
3. Désirée, by Annemarie Selinko. Morrow
4. Battle Cry, by Leon M. Uris. Putnam
5. From Here to Eternity, by James Jones. Scribner
6. The High and the Mighty, by Ernest K. Gann. Sloane
7. Beyond This Place, by A. J. Cronin. Little, Brown
8. Time and Time Again, by James Hilton. Little, Brown
9. Lord Vanity, by Samuel Shellabarger. Little, Brown
10. The Unconquered, by Ben Ames Williams. Houghton Mifflin.

1963

1. The Shoes of the Fisherman, by Morris L. West. Morrow
2. The Group, by Mary McCarthy. Harcourt, Brace & World
3. Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters, and Seymour--An Introduction, by J. D. Salinger. Little, Brown
4. Caravans, by James A. Michener. Random House
5. Elizabeth Appleton, by John O'Hara. Random House
6. Grandmother and the Priests, by Taylor Caldwell. Doubleday
7. City of Night, by John Rechy. Grove Press
8. The Glass-Blowers, by Daphne du Maurier. Doubleday
9. The Sand Pebbles, by Richard McKenna. Harper & Row
10. The Battle of the Villa Fiorita, by Rumer Godden. Viking Press

1964

1. The Spy Who Came in From the Cold, by John Le Carré. Coward-McCann
2. Candy, by Terry Southern and Mason Hoffenberg. Putnam
3. Herzog, by Saul Bellow. Viking Press
4. Armageddon, by Leon Uris. Doubleday
5. The Man, by Irving Wallace. Simon & Schuster
6. The Rector of Justin, by Louis Auchincloss. Houghton Mifflin
7. The Martyred, by Richard E. Kim. Braziller
8. You Only Live Twice, by Ian Fleming. New American Library
9. This Rough Magic, by Mary Stewart. Morrow
10. Convention, by Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey, II. Harper & Row

1973*

1. JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL by Richard Bach. Macmillan
2. ONCE IS NOT ENOUGH by Jacqueline Susann. Morrow
3. BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Delacorte/Lawrence
4. THE ODESSA FILE by Frederick Forsyth. Viking Press
5. BURR by Gore Vidal. Random House
6. THE HOLLOW HILLS by Mary Stewart. Morrow
7. EVENING IN BYZANTIUM by Irwin Shaw. Delacorte
8. THE MATLOCK PAPER by Robert Ludlum. Dial Press
9. THE BILLION DOLLAR SURE THING by Paul E. Erdman. Scribner
10. THE HONORARY CONSUL by Graham Greene. Simon & Schuster

1974*

1. CENTENNIAL by James A. Michener. Random House
2. WATERSHIP DOWN by Richard Adams. Macmillan
3. JAWS by Peter Benchley. Doubleday
4. TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SPY by John Le Carré. Knopf
5. SOMETHING HAPPENED by Joseph Heller. Knopf
6. THE DOGS OF WAY by Frederick Forsyth. Viking Press
7. THE PIRATE by Harold J. Robbins. Simon & Schuster
8. I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME by Margaret Craven. Doubleday
9. THE SEVEN-PER-CENT SOLUTION by John H. Watson, M.D., as edited by Nicholas Meyer. Dutton
10. THE FAN CLUB by Irving Wallace. Simon & Schuster

*Best sellers from 1973 and 1974 were taken from the February 1974 and February 1975 issues of Publishers' Weekly.

APPENDIX B

SEX ROLE CODESHEETS WITH TABULATIONS OF DATA FOR 1924, 1964, AND 1974

SEX ROLE CODESHEET--1924

Total No. of FCs = 16

A. Bibliography novel Total Results for 1924 Best Sellers

B. Date novel appeared on best-seller list ____

C. Name of FC ____ FC plays the part of a principal character 7 or major supporting character 9

D. Relationship of FC to principal male character: ____ friend-sweetheart = 5; friend = 2; wife = 3; lover = 2 mother & mother-in-law = 2, sister = 1

	Yes	No	Inapplicable
E. Economic characteristics			
1. FC works:			
part time at skilled job or profession	—	—	—
part time at nonskilled job or profession	—	—	—
full time at skilled job or profession	4	—	—
full time at nonskilled job or profession	—	—	—
2. FC does not need to work	11	—	—
3. List job or profession: college girl; teacher, farmer; painter; secretary; homemaker; preparing for role of homemaker while growing up			
4. FC works outside of home for nonprofit groups	2	—	—
5. List group(s): Red Cross			
6. FC dependent on husband's or father's income	11	—	—
7. FC works to support herself	1	—	—
8. FC is breadwinner for family	4	—	—
9. Purpose of FC's job is to:			
supplement husband's income	—	—	—
pursue own career	1	—	—
10. Plot reveals that FC is most responsible for maintenance of home and care of children	4	4	8
11. Economic status of FC is upper class 11 or middle class 4 or lower class 1			

	Yes	No	Inapplicable
F. Social characteristics of FC			
1. Age 20's = 11; 30's = 2; 3 shown aging			
2. Status: single 9 married 6 separated ___ divorced ___ widowed 1 children 5 no children ___			
3. Educational background: grade school or less 2 attended high school ___ finished high school ___ attended college 3 graduated college 3 graduate school ___ educational background not mentioned 8			
4. FC has close female friends	7	7	2
5. FC has close male friends with whom there is no sexual involvement	10	5	1
6. FC and her mate share a social life as a couple seeing other couples	1	3	12
7. Plot reflects FC as conforming to the social conventions of the time	9	7	—
8. Plot reflects FC as passing on traditional role expectancies to children	2	2	12
9. Plot reveals that FC is successful at that which she undertakes	13	3	—
10. FC spends leisure time by attending social functions = 10; visiting with old and new friends = 2; exploring environment = 1; pouting and isolating herself = 1; activities with family = 1; inapplicable = 1			
G. Sexual behavior of FC			
1. FC has sex only with husband	2	2	—
2. FC has premarital sex with fiance or assumed to be fiance	—	—	—
3. FC has premarital sex with no assumption of future marriage	2	—	—
4. FC has several affairs at same time	1	—	—
5. FC has extramarital affair	2	—	—
6. FC has sex with another woman	—	—	—
7. Plot reveals FC experiencing guilt over sex	2	3	—
8. FC initiates sexual activity	4	1	—
9. FC's sexuality discussed abstractly by author	5	—	—
10. FC's sexuality not discussed by author	4	—	—

	Yes	No	Inapplicable
H. Intellectual characteristics of FC			
1. Plot reveals FC expressing her opinions on a variety of topics	11	3	2
2. Plot reveals FC having few or no thoughts about topics outside home and family	3	11	2
3. Plot reveals that actions of FC are necessary to the resolution of the major conflict of the plot	7	—	—
4. Plot reveals that FC initiates at least some action related to the major conflict	9	—	—

5. List goals that FC is trying to achieve:
   Implicit: find meaning to own life = 3; search for sense of beauty = 1; impart to others own sense of beauty = 1
   Explicit: support family = 4; have fun = 3; paint well = 1; get a certain man = 1; come to terms with truth about loved one = 1; help hero solve his problem = 3; escape husband and his family = 1
6. FC is successful 12 or partly successful 3 or unsuccessful 1 in trying to reach her goal

I. Change experienced by FC			
1. Plot reflects little or no change in situation of FC	2	14	—

2. Marital status: single-affianced = 5; married-widow = 1; estranged-reconciled = 1; married-separated = 1; single-married = 1
3. Economic status: poor-comfortable = 2; comfortable-poor = 1
4. Social status: college girl-working girl = 1; upper class-frontierswoman = 1
5. Sexual status: loose-more respectable = 2; faithful-unfaithful = 1; virgin-nonvirgin = 1
6. Plot reflects that change in status of FC left her
   happier than before change 13
   unhappier than before change 1
   unaffected by change —

SEX ROLE CODESHEET--1964

Total No. of FCs = 11

A. Bibliography of novel Total Results for 1964 Best Sellers

B. Date novel appeared on best-seller list _____

C. Name of FC _____ FC plays the part of a principal character 2 or major supporting character 9

D. Relationship of FC to principal male character: _____ inapplicable = 3; lovers = 3; employee = 2; ex-wife = 1; fiancée = 1; daughter-in-law = 1

	Yes	No	Inapplicable
E. Economic characteristics			
1. FC works:			
part time at skilled job or profession	1	—	—
part time at nonskilled job or profession	—	—	—
full time at skilled job or profession	7	—	—
full time at nonskilled job or profession	1	—	—
2. FC does not need to work	2	—	—
3. List job or profession: librarian; college student; maid; secretary; pearl diver; actress; homemaker; political volunteer; legal clerk			
4. FC works outside of home for nonprofit groups	2	—	—
5. List group(s): Communist Party; establishment political party			
6. FC dependent on husband's or father's income	4	—	—
7. FC works to support herself	7	—	—
8. FC is breadwinner for family	—	—	—
9. Purpose of FC's job is to:			
supplement husband's income	—	—	—
pursue own career	3	—	—
10. Plot reveals that FC is most responsible for maintenance of home and care of children	3	—	8
11. Economic status of FC is upper class 2 or middle class 9 or lower class —			

		Yes	No	Inapplicable
F.	Social characteristics of FC			
	1. Age 20's = 3; 30's or 40's = 8			
	2. Status: single 10 married 2 separated 1 divorced ___ widowed ___ children 2 no children ___			
	3. Educational background: grade school or less ___ attended high school ___ finished high school ___ attended college 3 graduated college 1 graduate school 1 educational background not mentioned 6			
	4. FC has close female friends	3	4	4
	5. FC has close male friends with whom there is no sexual involvement	1	6	4
	6. FC and her mate share a social life as a couple seeing other couples	1	2	8
	7. Plot reflects FC as conforming to the social conventions of the time	5	5	1
	8. Plot reflects FC as passing on traditional role expectancies to children	—	—	11
	9. Plot reveals that FC is successful at that which she undertakes	10	—	1
	10. FC spends leisure time by inapplicable = 7; attending social gatherings = 2; dating one person = 1; working for Communist Party = 1			
G.	Sexual behavior of FC			
	1. FC has sex with only husband	2	1	—
	2. FC has premarital sex with fiance or assumed to be fiance	2	—	—
	3. FC has premarital sex with no assumption of future marriage	3	1	—
	4. FC has several affairs at same time	1	—	—
	5. FC has extramarital affair	1	—	—
	6. FC has sex with another woman	—	—	—
	7. Plot reveals FC experiencing guilt over sex	1	3	—
	8. FC initiates sexual activity	5	1	—
	9. FC's sexuality discussed abstractly by author	2	—	—
	10. FC's sexuality not discussed by author	1	—	—

	Yes	No	Inapplicable
H. Intellectual characteristics of FC			
1. Plot reveals FC expressing her opinions on a variety of topics	10	—	1
2. Plot reveals FC having few or no thoughts about topics outside home and family	—	10	1
3. Plot reveals that actions of FC are necessary to the resolution of the major conflict of the plot	2	—	—
4. Plot reveals that FC initiates at least some action related to the major conflict	9	—	—

5. List goals that FC is trying to achieve:
Implicit: find own identity = 1; find peace and happiness = 2
Explicit: help hero to solve problem or avoid misfortune = 6; find father = 1; marry particular man = 1

6. FC is successful 6 or partly successful 2 or unsuccessful 3 in trying to reach her goal

I. Change experienced by FC

1. Plot reflects little or no change in situation of FC
2. Marital status: single-affianced = 2 (2); married-divorced = 1 (8); (1)
3. Economic status: comfortable-destitute = 2
4. Social status: prejudiced-tolerant = 1; acceptance-ostracism and nervous breakdown = 1
5. Sexual status: unattached-involved = 1
6. Plot reflects that change in status of FC left her
happier than before change 5
unhappier than before change 3
unaffected by change ___

SEX ROLE CODESHEET--1974

Total No. of FCs = 8

A. Bibliography of novel Total Results for 1974 Best Sellers

B. Date novel appeared on best-seller list

C. Name of FC FC plays the part of a principal character 2 or major supporting character 6

D. Relationship of FC to principal male character wife = 7; idol = 1

	Yes	No	Inapplicable
E. Economic characteristics			
1. FC works:			
part time at skilled job or profession	—	—	—
part time at nonskilled job or profession	—	—	—
full time at skilled job or profession	7	—	—
full time at nonskilled job or profession	—	—	—
2. FC does not need to work	1	—	—
3. List job or profession homemaker; frontierswomen; actress			
4. FC works outside of home for nonprofit groups	—	—	—
5. List group(s)			
6. FC dependent on husband's or father's income	7	—	—
7. FC works to support herself	1	—	—
8. FC is breadwinner for family	—	—	—
9. Purpose of FC's job is to:			
supplement husband's income	1	—	—
pursue own career			
10. Plot reveals that FC is most responsible for maintenance of home and care of children	6	—	2
11. Economic status of FC is upper class 2 or middle class 3 or lower class 1 inapplicable 1			

		Yes	No	Inapplicable
F.	Social characteristics of FC			
1.	Age 30's = 3; 40's = 1; 4 are shown as aging			
2.	Status: single 1 married 7 separated ___ divorced ___ widowed ___ children 5 no children			
3.	Educational background: grade school or less 1 attended high school ___ finished high school ___ attended college ___ graduated college ___ graduated school ___ educational background not mentioned 7			
4.	FC has close female friends	5	___	3
5.	FC has close male friends with whom there is no sexual involvement	1	4	3
6.	FC and her mate share a social life as a couple seeing other couples	5	1	2
7.	Plot reflects FC as conforming to the social conventions of the time	6	2	___
8.	Plot reflects FC as passing on traditional role expectancies to children	5	___	3
9.	Plot reveals that FC is successful at that which she undertakes	5	___	3
10.	FC spends leisure time by attending social functions = 4; inapplicable = 4			
G.	Sexual behavior of FC			
1.	FC has sex only with husband	2	___	___
2.	FC has premarital sex with fiance or assumed to be fiance	___	___	___
3.	FC has premarital sex with no assumption of future marriage (raped)	1	___	___
4.	FC has several affairs at same time	1	___	___
5.	FC has extramarital affair	2	___	___
6.	FC has sex with another woman	___	___	___
7.	Plot reveals FC experiencing guilt over sex	1	2	___
8.	FC initiates sexual activity	3	2	___
9.	FC's sexuality discussed abstractly by author	___	___	___
10.	FC's sexuality not discussed by author	3	___	___

	Yes	No	Inapplicable
H. Intellectual characteristics of FC			
1. Plot reveals FC expressing her opinions on a variety of topics	8		
2. Plot reveals FC having few or no thoughts about topics outside home and family		8	
3. Plot reveals that actions of FC are necessary to the resolution of the major conflict of the plot	2		
4. Plot reveals that FC initiates at least some action related to the major conflict	6		

5. List goals that FC is trying to achieve:
Implicit: keep marriage together = 2; find the good life = 3; be accepted by society = 1
Explicit: raise a family = 1; get to Colorado = 1; have affair = 1; protect stepchildren from terrorists = 1; get away from captors = 2; inapplicable = 1

6. FC is successful 4 or partly successful 1 or unsuccessful 2 in trying to reach her goal. (inapplicable = 1)

	Yes	No	Inapplicable
I. Change experienced by FC			
1. Plot reflects little or no change in situation of FC	2	6	

2. Marital status: single-married = 1; indifferent-devoted = 1
3. Economic status: middle class-upper class = 1; struggling-destitute = 1
4. Social status:
5. Sexual status: faithful-unfaithful = 1; used-user = 1
6. Plot reflects that change in status of FC left her:
happier than before change 3
unhappier than before change 3
unaffected by change

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